

Solving challenges, meeting needs

Wisconsin's economy clearly depends on its transportation system, whether for domestic or international freight, as a business attraction tool, for commuting and business travel, or for tourism.

Our future economic success depends on the availability of a high-quality, well-maintained transportation network. With adequate investment, the wide variety of transportation services and systems in Wisconsin will serve our economy for years to come.

- Shipment transit times are unpredictable, leading to inconsistent operations;
- Truck fuel use and driver hours increase, leading to higher costs;
- Workers face long commute times with high stress;
- Tourists may be turned off from making future trips.

Congestion also contributes to safety concerns. On the highway, crashes caused by congested conditions lead to even more congestion in a

the Corridors 2020 highway system was congested in 2000. These routes carry the bulk of traffic supporting industry, tourism and commuting needs.

In southeast Wisconsin, without corrective action, 45% of freeway miles will face moderate congestion (or worse) by 2020, and up to 17% of freeway miles would be congested for over 11 hours each day.

Congestion is growing not only geographically, but also in duration. Affected freeway



Congestion increases costs, reduces reliability

Transportation and logistics represents an estimated 10% of total operating costs for businesses. As firms measure down-time in minutes rather than hours, they need reliable and consistent transportation service to reduce costs.

Congestion in all modes is a growing transportation issue that has a number of direct impacts on the economy:

vicious cycle. In particular, studies have shown that rear-end crashes are five to fifteen times more likely on congested highways than on other routes.

Congestion is growing, even in Wisconsin

Wisconsin enjoys relatively low commute times and still maintains a perception of free-flowing traffic. Yet even in our state, congestion on our networks is a growing concern.

Wisconsin's State Highway Plan 2020 revealed that 17% of

segments today are under congested conditions for 5.5 hours per day, compared to only 3.5 hours in 1991.

High traffic levels are even of concern on our rail system. With growth in North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other long-distance trade routes, railroads carry large amounts of freight through Wisconsin. One of the major challenges of implementing new passenger rail service in the state is the need to provide adequate rail capacity.

Traffic will continue to grow as our economy grows. The U.S. DOT estimates that domestic freight traffic could increase 87% by 2020, further stressing our congested systems.

Preserving and improving state highways

The state also needs to preserve transportation infrastructure. The State Highway Plan found that 30% of pavements and 7% of bridges need improvement. Also, many portions of the system have safety deficiencies that can be addressed with physical improvements.

In response to the congestion, preservation and safety needs, Wisconsin is poised to invest \$20.2 billion over 21 years in the 11,800-mile State Highway System to accomplish three key goals:

1. Maintain our highways with smooth surfaces and solid structural conditions;
2. Improve safety on the highway system; and
3. Keep traffic moving free from congestion.

Over one-quarter of the \$20.2 billion investment is needed on the southeast freeway system to meet the specific congestion, safety and preservation needs on the cornerstone of the state's highway system.

While the State Highway Plan calls for a 21-year

investment of \$20.2 billion to reduce congestion, safety and infrastructure problems, current state highway funding programs provide only \$15.3 billion during that timeframe.

Technology also plays a major role in reducing congestion, especially for trucks. With weigh-in-motion facilities, the state can effectively monitor truck safety while reducing delay at weigh stations.

By using traffic sensors and cameras with direct links to local law enforcement, the state can improve traffic flow on key urban freeways and reduce delays caused by minor traffic incidents.

Keeping strong links to communities

Wisconsin's 100,000 miles of local roads and streets also need to be well-maintained to serve our economy.

Without quality local roads, grains cannot leave the farm, goods cannot reach markets, people cannot get to work, and tourists cannot get to resorts.

Through a cooperative effort with local agencies, Wisconsin is developing a computer-based system to monitor investment needs on local roads. Today, local road improvements are funded through a combination of federal, state and local sources that may not adequately address all needs.

With the new system, state and local governments can better identify local road needs, and determine an appropriate level of resources to meet needs.



Planning for investments across all modes

From metropolitan areas to the smallest villages and towns, Wisconsin is carefully planning investments for all transportation modes to meet the needs of our economy.

The State Airport System Plan identifies \$1.1 billion of needs through 2020 for airport improvements. However, current funding levels provide only \$821 million during that period.

Wisconsin's State Rail Plan will help ensure that shippers and industries have safe and efficient access to rail service.

Wisconsin is also part of a nine-state consortium that is planning a high-speed rail network over 3,000 miles in the Midwest.

With 110 MPH service and new trains, the Midwest

Regional Rail Initiative could revolutionize business and leisure travel in the Midwest. Over 10.5 million people live in the Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison corridor, the first service phase in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin and other Midwest states are working with the US Congress to develop funding mechanisms for this new transportation option.

The state continues to offer programs to provide and upgrade local bicycle and pedestrian facilities for commuters and tourists.

The 68 public transit and shared-ride taxi services in the state serve over 75 million riders annually, and the systems all need continued investment. Currently, transit services in Wisconsin are funded through local (20%), state (33%), federal (25%) and fare-box (22%) revenues.

State investment in ports is critical to continue to provide services to many industries, and to accommodate emerging passenger options.

Making it happen

Our state needs to invest in transportation to ensure a vital and healthy economy with the opportunity to continue to grow.

Wisconsin's Statewide Long-Range Plan 2030 will examine transportation needs across all modes for the next 25 years to form a framework for future investment needs.

There are many opportunities for stakeholder input on an advisory committee or at future public meetings. Call the Wisconsin Department of Transportation at (608) 266-8108 for more information on this effort.

Photo by Canadian National Railroad

Conclusion

An efficient transportation system is, and will continue to be, a major key in providing solid economic opportunities in Wisconsin. Quality transportation helps ensure the state's ability to compete in a global economy, thus offering good jobs and a high quality of life.

Wisconsin moves products and people to and from the region, the nation and the world. Even in the context of a changing economy, the

flow of goods and the movement of people will remain a key part of the economy.

The vast majority of transportation needs continue to be served by highways, and the state needs to provide a highway system that is safe, reliable and accessible. There are also critical needs on the state's airport, railroad, harbor and pedestrian networks that support many different and growing aspects of our economy.

Over the past decade, Wisconsin has made strategic, targeted investments in the

transportation system to help secure our state's strong position in the global economy. With freight traffic expected to double in the next twenty years, the state must renew efforts to work with elected officials, businesses, citizens and all stakeholders to plan future investments. To remain poised for future growth, Wisconsin must continue to make sound investments in transportation services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the 21st Century economy.

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